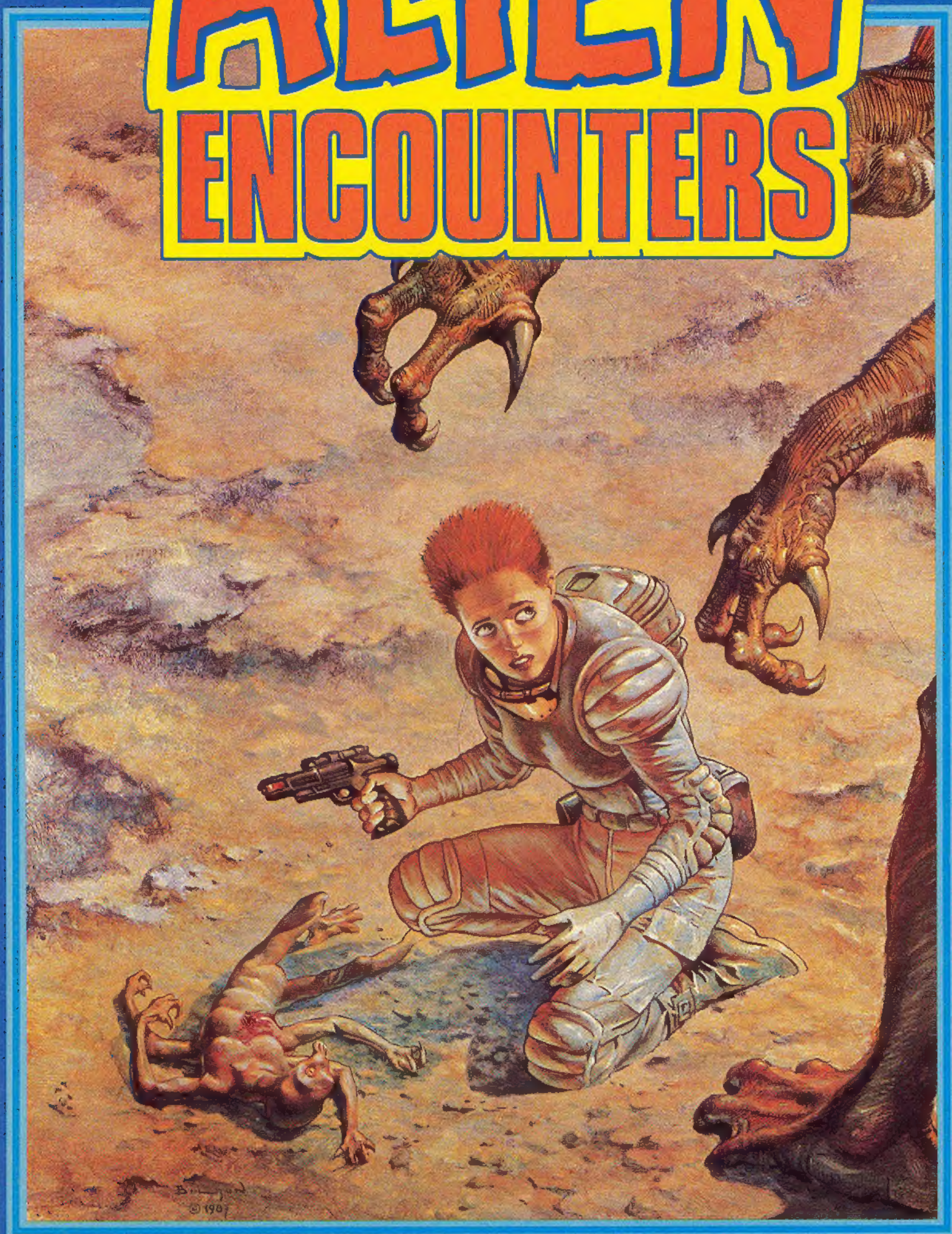


ALIEN ENCOUNTERS



THE BUSTER CRABBE COLLECTOR

LESTER LOUD WAS LIKE A HUMAN CASH REGISTER. WHEN HE TALKED ABOUT HIS COLLECTION OF TWENTIETH CENTURY MEMORABILIA, IT WAS EASY TO IMAGINE HIS MIND BEEPING AS IT READ OFF THE PRICE CODES, HIS EYES FLASHING GREEN LIGHTS AS HE REGURGITATED THE oft-quoted figures.

THAT'S MY NEWEST FIND, JOY! IT COST ME FIVE THOUSAND CREDNOTES -- AND IT'S WORTH IT! WHEN I SELL ALL THIS SOME DAY, IT'LL BRING TEN, MAYBE FIFTEEN!

I LIKE IT, LESTER. IT'S SO HOKEY AND SO CUTE.

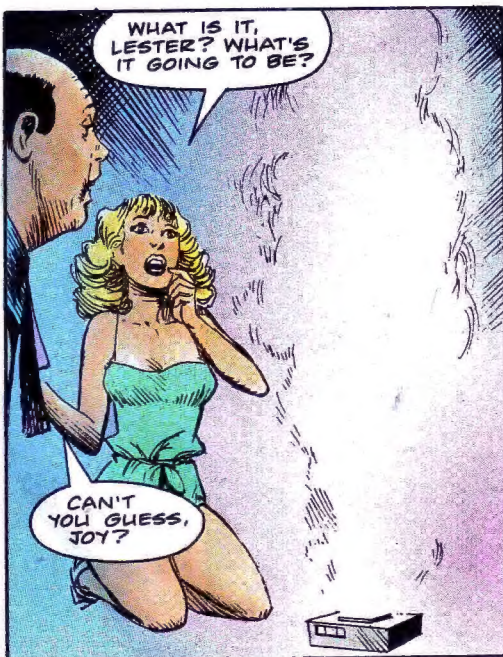
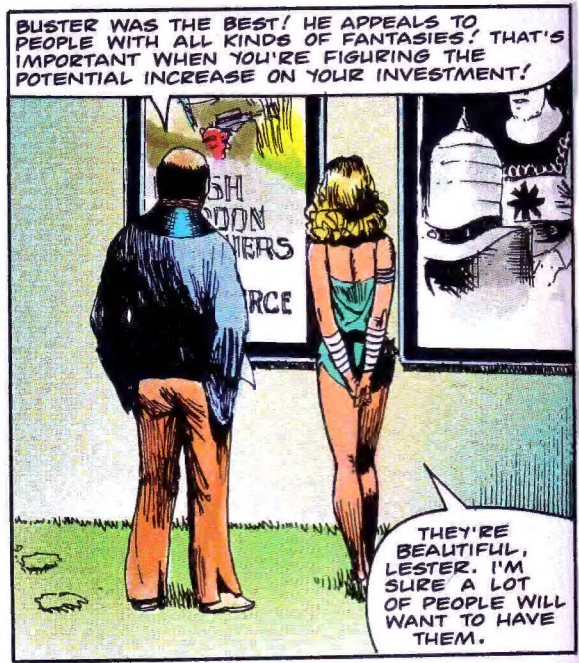
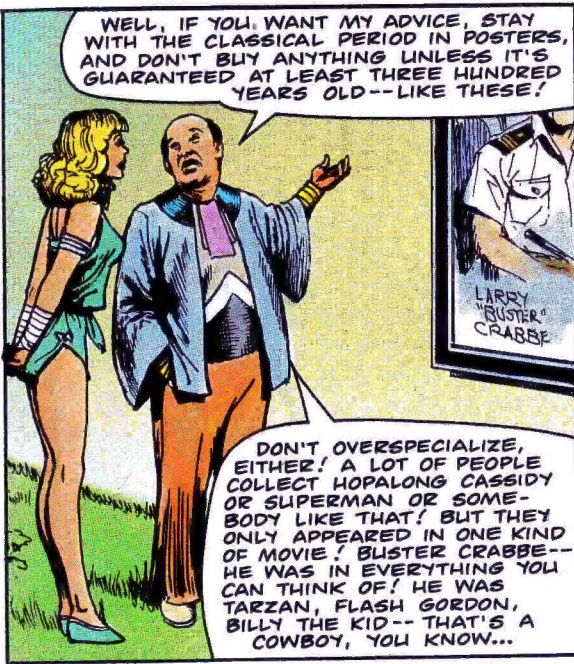
STORY: JACK BUTTERWORTH
ART: JOHN RIDGWAY
LETTERS: ANNIE HALFACREE
COLORS: SAM PARSONS

"HOKEY AND CUTE!" THAT, MY DEAR, IS WHY I'VE HIRED YOU AS MY TENNIS COACH AND NOT MY FINANCIAL ADVISOR! SINCE THEY STARTED BUILDING HOMES WITHOUT WINDOWS IN THE LATE 2100'S, THE PRICES ON THESE THINGS HAVE GONE THROUGH THE ROOF!

BUT AREN'T YOU WORRIED ABOUT HAVING ALL THAT MONEY INVESTED IN PAPER? AFTER ALL, A FIRE OR FLOOD --

I'VE INSURED ALL THIS "HOKEY AND CUTE" STUFF FOR THREE TIMES ITS BOOK VALUE! NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS--DISASTER OR THEFT--I MAKE MONEY!

I'M SURE I COULD LEARN A LOT ABOUT MONEY FROM YOU, LESTER!



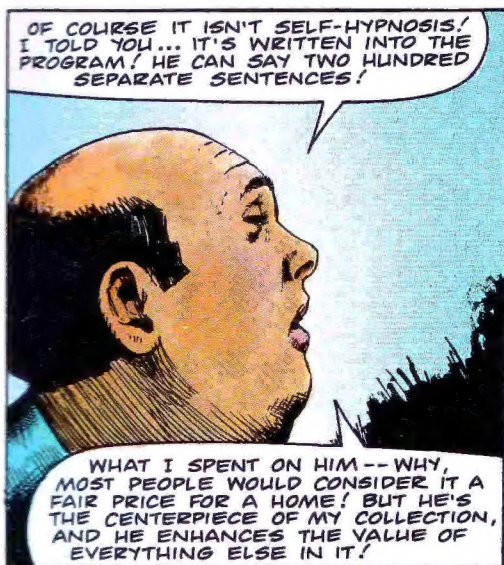


A SIMULOID! I'VE NEVER SEEN ONE LIKE THIS BEFORE!

GO AHEAD! YOU CAN TOUCH HIM! IT'S PROGRAMMED INTO THE COMPUTER! HE CAN EVEN SHAKE HANDS!

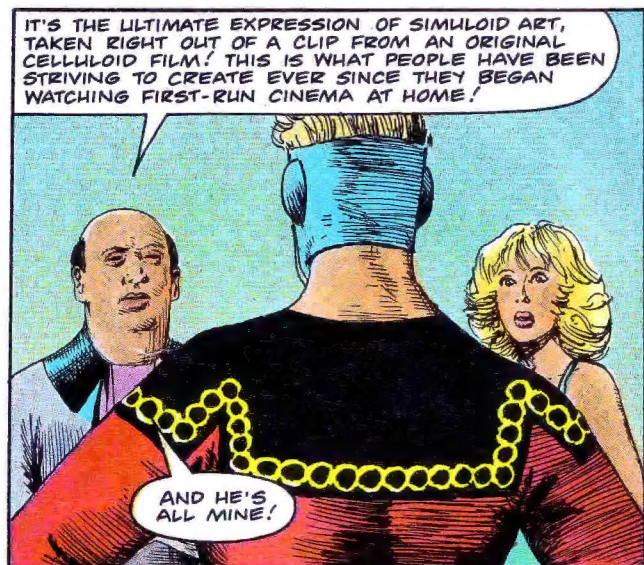


IT FEELS JUST LIKE SKIN! IS IT SELF-HYPNOSIS?



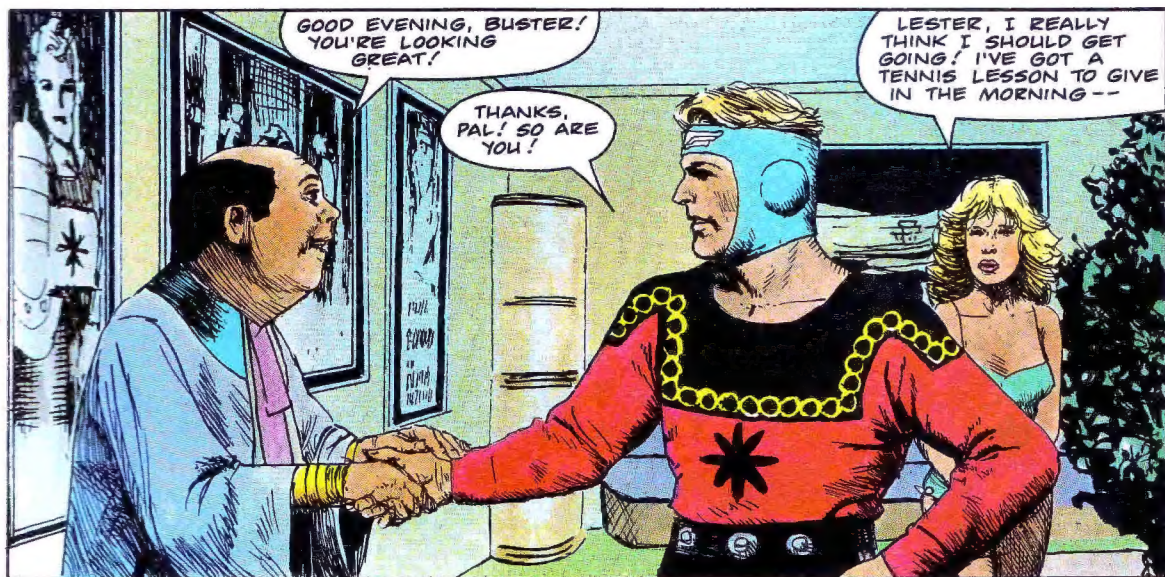
OF COURSE IT ISN'T SELF-HYPNOSIS! I TOLD YOU... IT'S WRITTEN INTO THE PROGRAM! HE CAN SAY TWO HUNDRED SEPARATE SENTENCES!

WHAT I SPENT ON HIM -- WHY, MOST PEOPLE WOULD CONSIDER IT A FAIR PRICE FOR A HOME! BUT HE'S THE CENTERPIECE OF MY COLLECTION, AND HE ENHANCES THE VALUE OF EVERYTHING ELSE IN IT!



IT'S THE ULTIMATE EXPRESSION OF SIMULOID ART, TAKEN RIGHT OUT OF A CLIP FROM AN ORIGINAL CELLULOID FILM! THIS IS WHAT PEOPLE HAVE BEEN STRIVING TO CREATE EVER SINCE THEY BEGAN WATCHING FIRST-RUN CINEMA AT HOME!

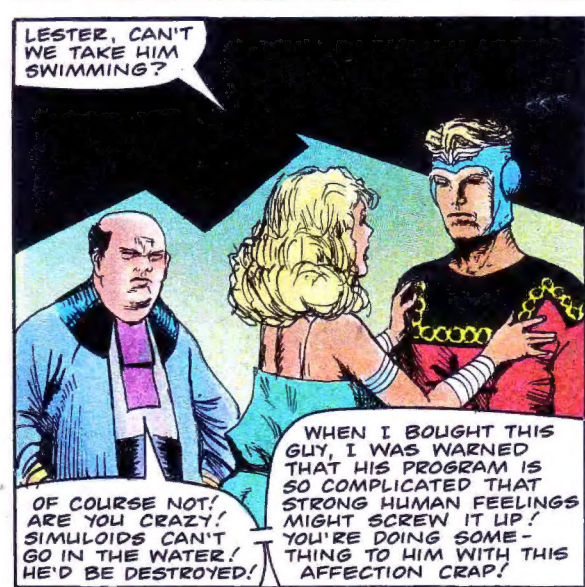
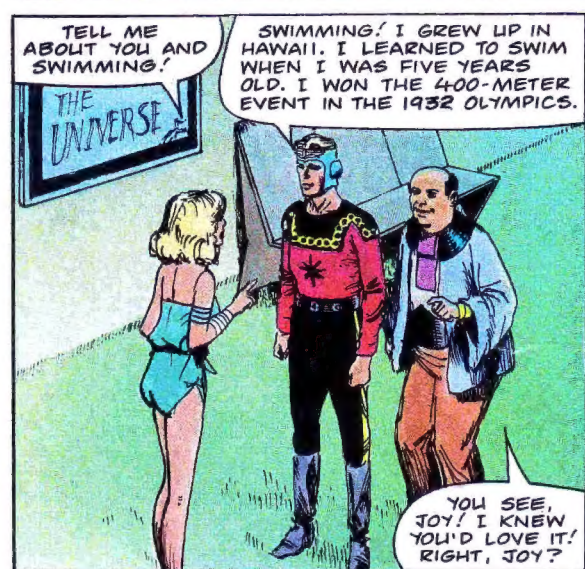
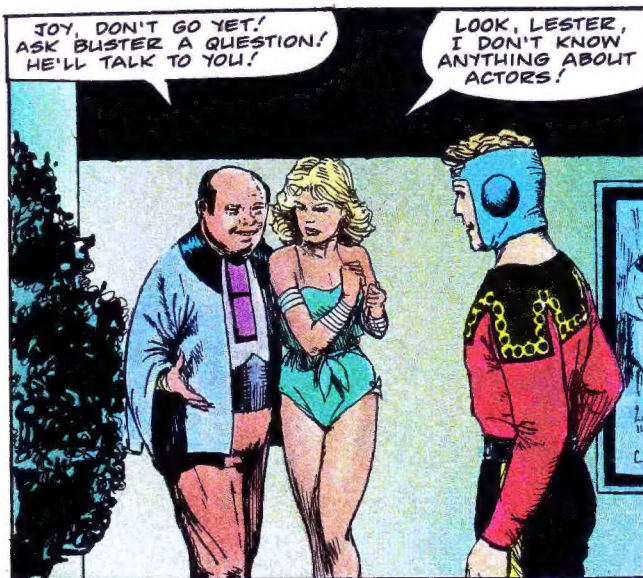
AND HE'S ALL MINE!



GOOD EVENING, BUSTER! YOU'RE LOOKING GREAT!

THANKS, PAL! SO ARE YOU!

LESTER, I REALLY THINK I SHOULD GET GOING! I'VE GOT A TENNIS LESSON TO GIVE IN THE MORNING --



YOU POSSESSIVE INFANT! YOU'RE JEALOUS OF A SIMULOID! YOU'RE JEALOUS BECAUSE HE LOVES SPORTS AND I LOVE SPORTS AND YOU DON'T!

WHO CARES ABOUT STUPID SPORTS? CAN'T YOU SEE WHAT YOU'RE DOING TO HIM? HE'S SCOWLING! BUSTER NEVER SCOWLED BEFORE! HE ALWAYS HAD THAT DUMB SMILE ON HIS FACE!

HEY! WHO ARE YOU CALLING DUMB?

YOU CAN'T LEAVE YOUR BOX! THEY TOLD ME SO AT THE FACTORY!

THIS HAS GONE FAR ENOUGH! YOU CAN'T GO IN WATER! YOU'RE NOT EVEN SUPPOSED TO LEAVE YOUR PROTECTOR BOX! YOU'LL -- YOU'LL DE-RESOLVE YOURSELF!

YOU'RE FORGETTING WHO PAYS THE BILLS AROUND HERE!

HOW ABOUT THAT! I'M A MOVIE HERO! I'M DOING WHAT HEROES ARE SUPPOSED TO DO -- I'M MAKING HISTORY.

YOU KNOW WHAT I'M GOING TO DO? I'M GOING TO FIND A POOL AND GO FOR A SWIM!

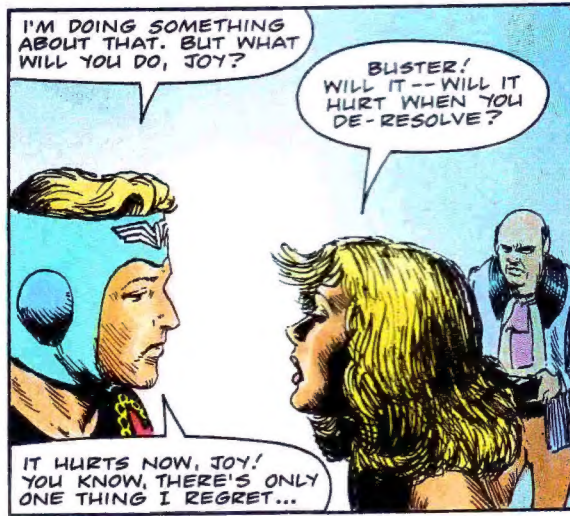
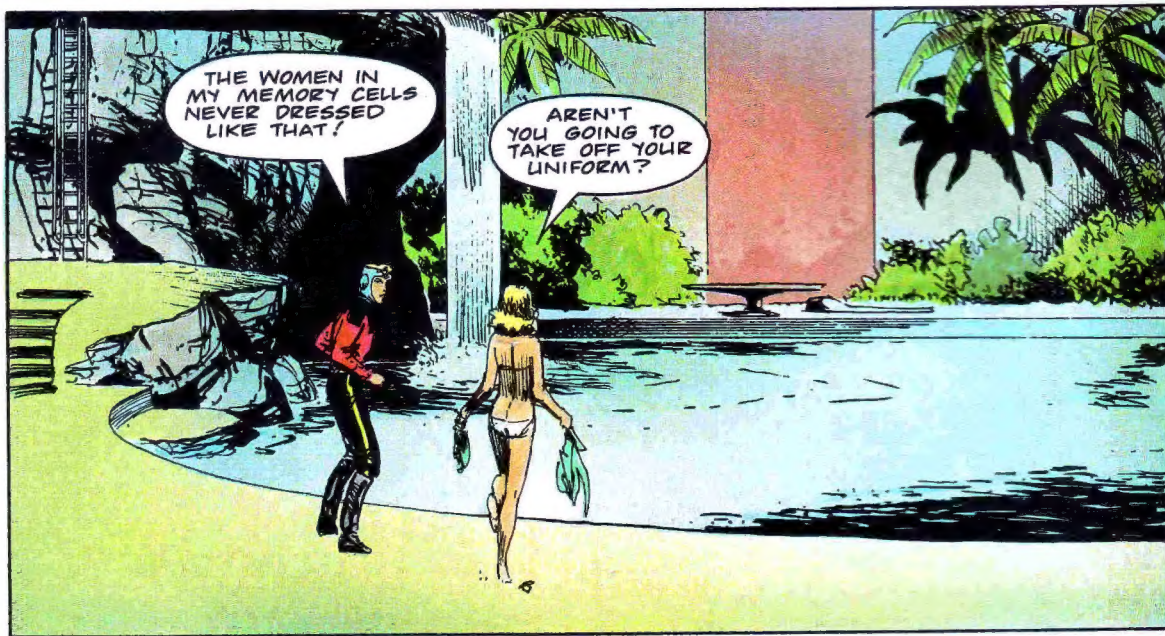
IT'S BETTER THAN BEING COOPED UP IN THERE LIKE A MECHANICAL PARROT!

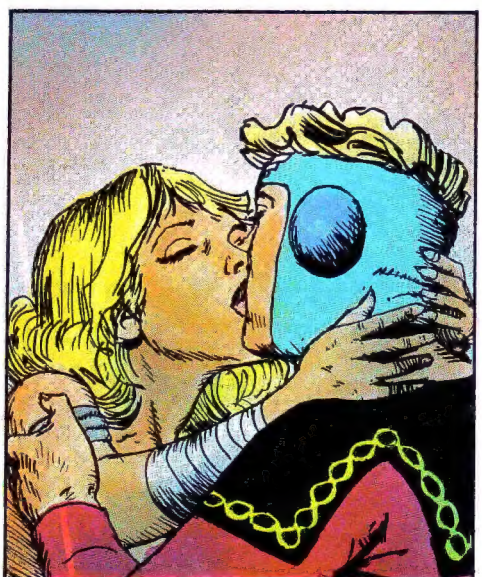
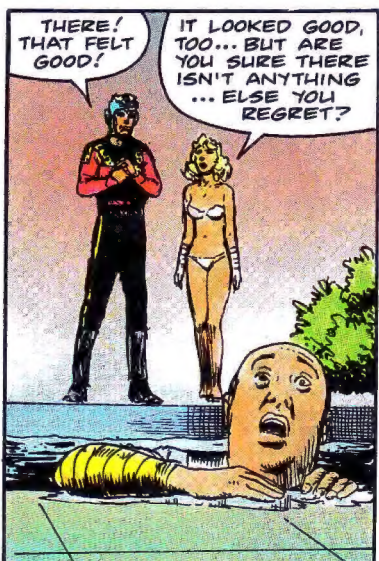
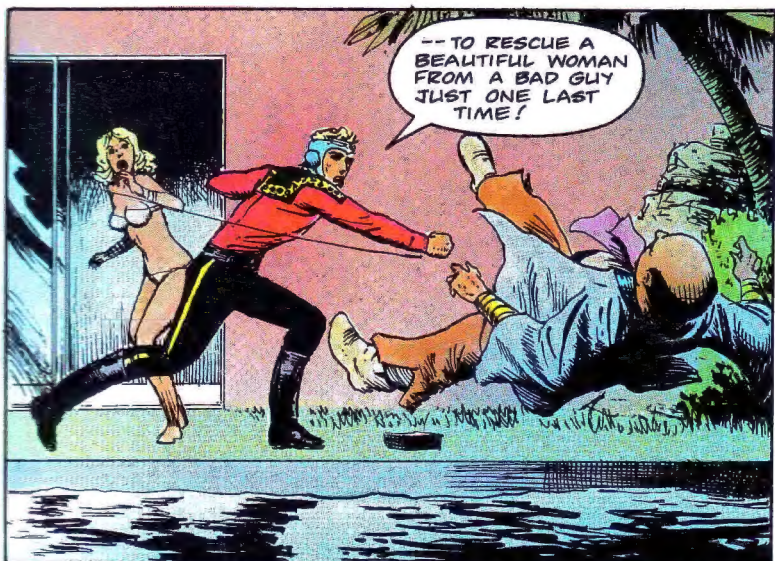
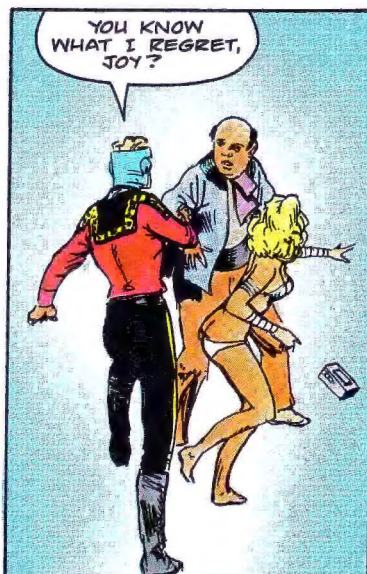
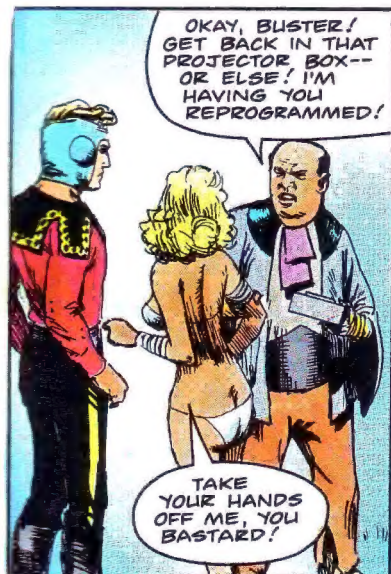
BY THE WAY, YOU CAN TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF ME!

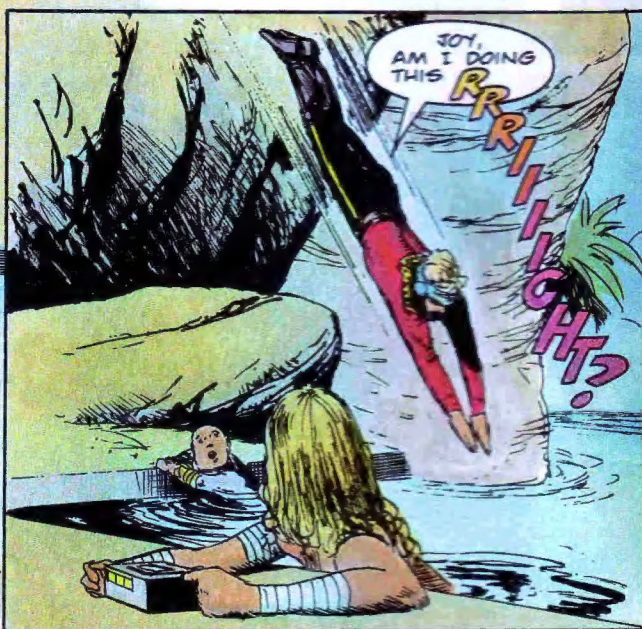
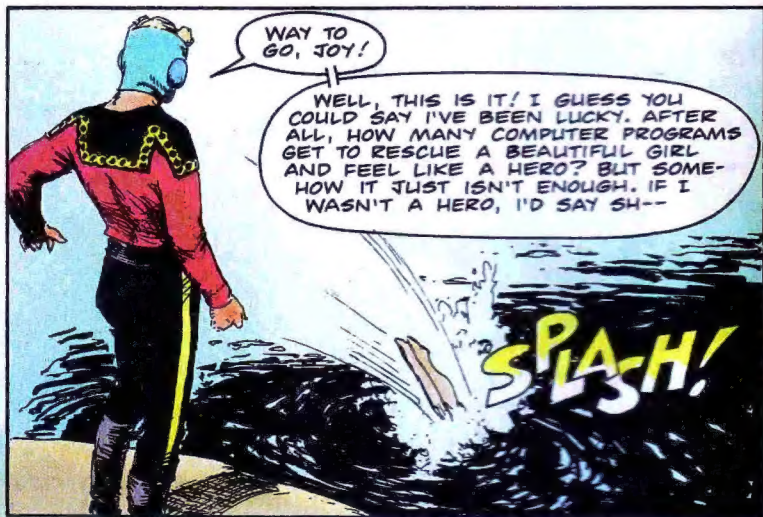
I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU!

HEY! IF YOU LEAVE, HE'S GOING TO BLAME ME! I'LL PROBABLY LOSE MY JOB AT THE TENNIS CLUB!

AW, HECK. YOU'RE GOING THE WRONG WAY. WAIT UP... I'LL TAKE YOU TO THE POOL.







END

THERE IS A STORY
THAT HAS NEVER
BEEN TOLD...

A STORY OF PERFECT
SPHERES THAT DRIFTED
THROUGH SPACE LIKE
IDEAS THROUGH THE
MIND OF A PAINTER...

THE STORY OF THE CHILD-
REN OF THE SPHERES,
WHO BUILT A WORLD OF
BEAUTY THAT PUT THEIR
SHINING SUN TO SHAME--

--AND THE HIDEOUS
WARS THEY FOUGHT
TO KEEP THEIR WORLD
THAT SPLIT THEIR
STAR IN HALF.

THE STORY OF THEIR ARRIVAL ON
EARTH, LIKE THE SUN SHINING
THROUGH THE ICICLES--

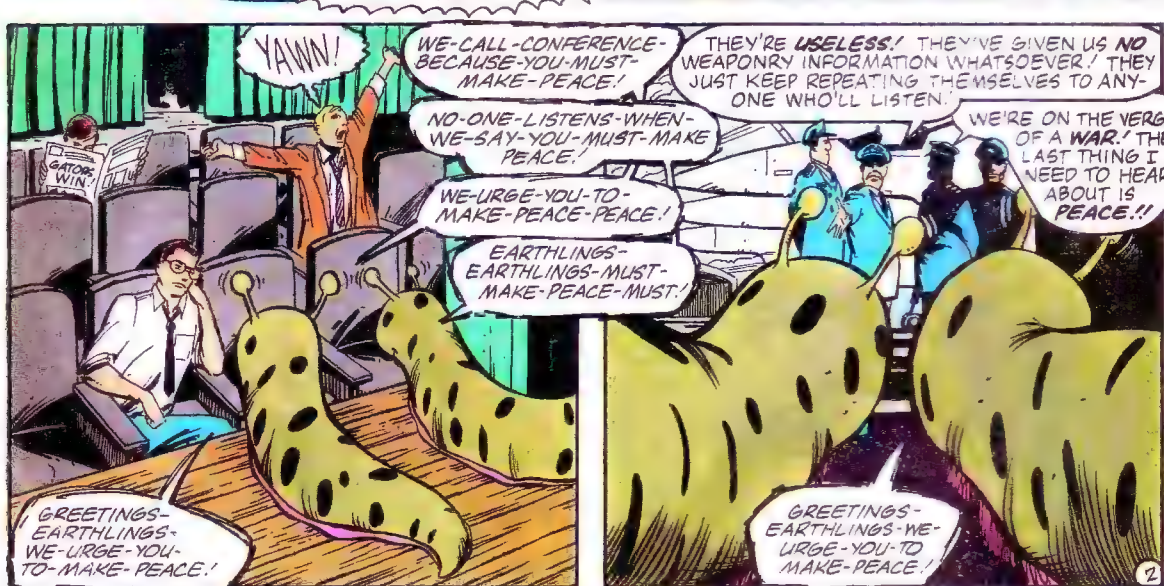
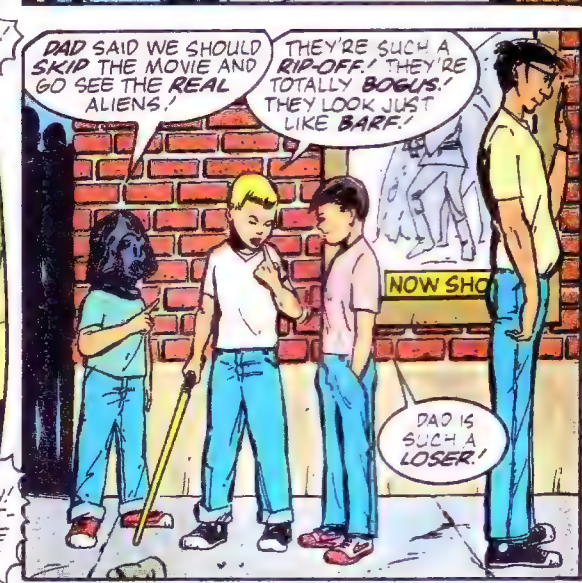
--HOW THEY TAUGHT OUR
ARTISTS NEW COLORS
AND OUR WRITERS NEW
WORDS AND HOW OUR
FARMERS LEARNED TO
FEED THE MULTITUDES.

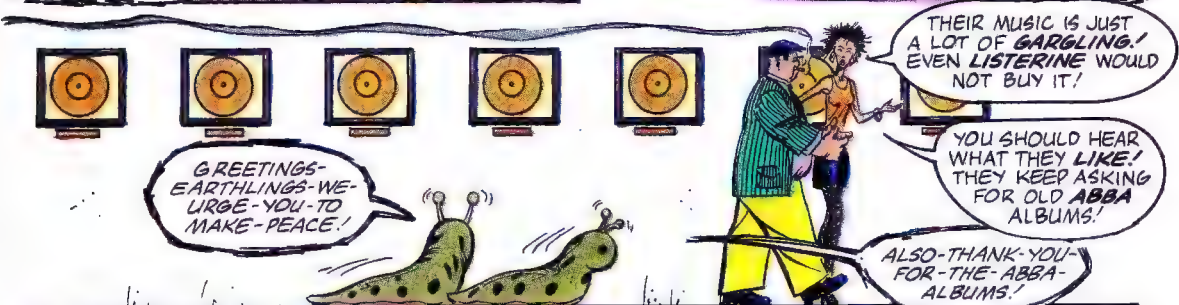
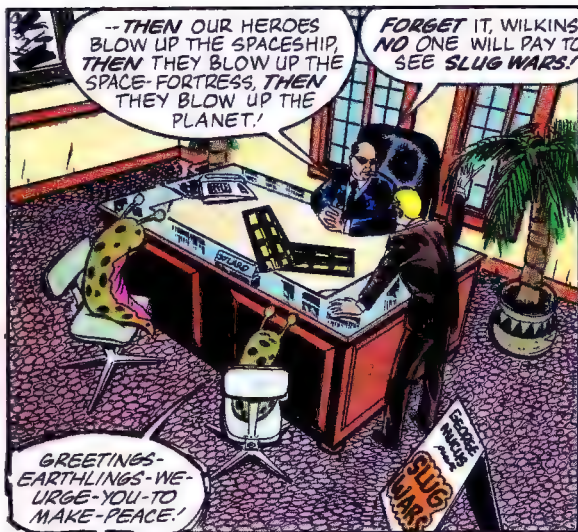
THIS, HOWEVER, IS
NOT THAT STORY.

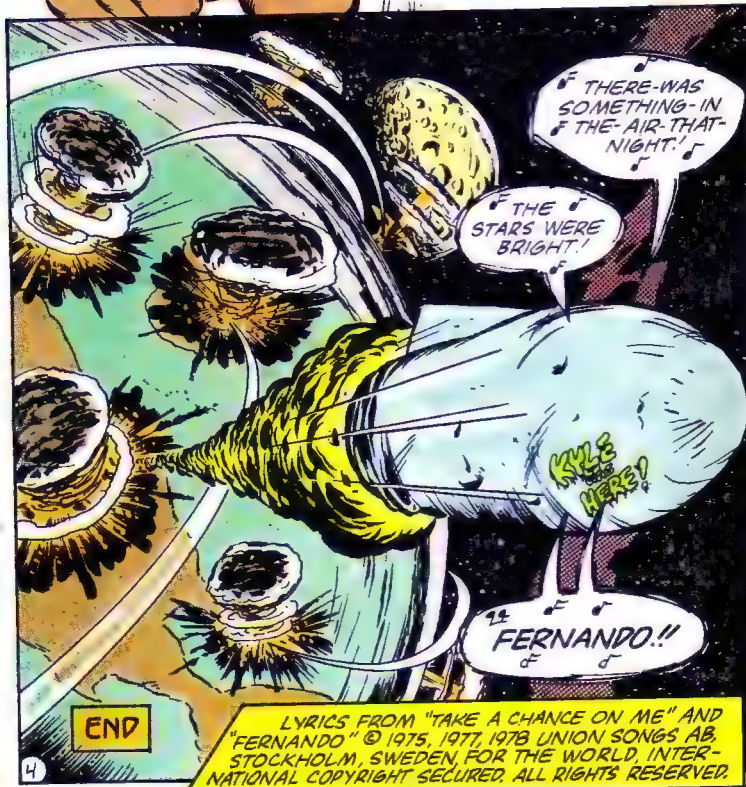
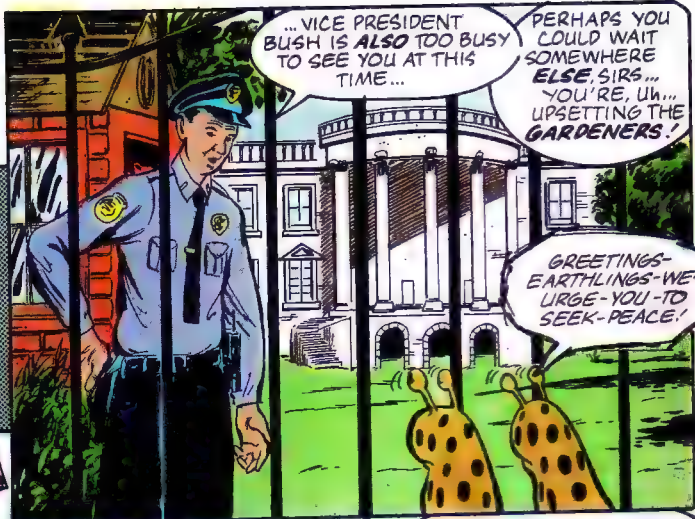
IN OTHER NEWS,
**ALIENS LANDED
TODAY!**

BEPPE SABATINI
WRITER
GRAHAM NOLAN
ARTIST

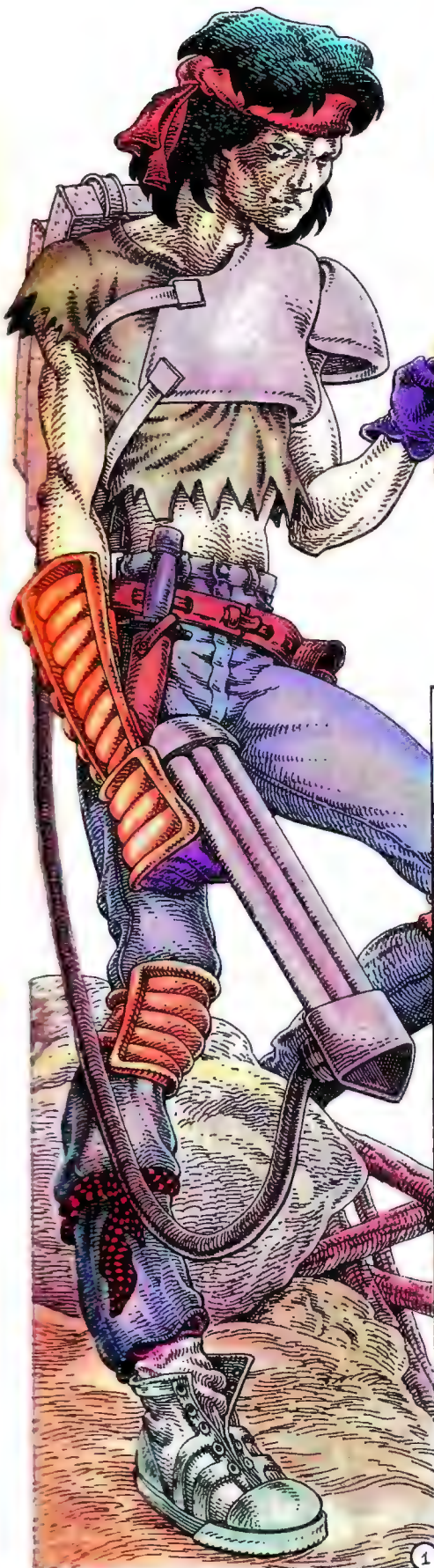
KURT HATHAWAY
LETTERS
MARCUS DAVID
COLOURS



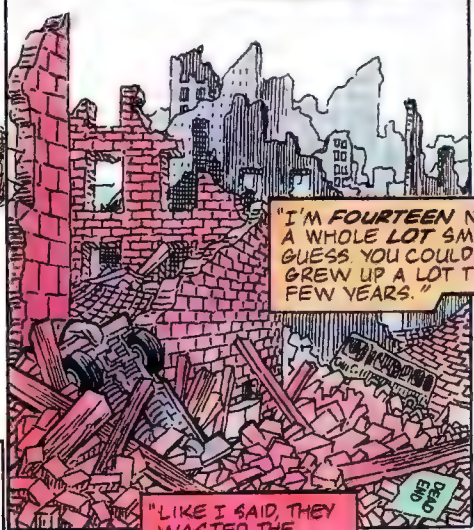




LYRICS FROM "TAKE A CHANCE ON ME" AND "FERNANDO" © 1975, 1977, 1978 UNION SONGS AB, STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN, FOR THE WORLD, INTERNATIONAL COPYRIGHT SECURED, ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.



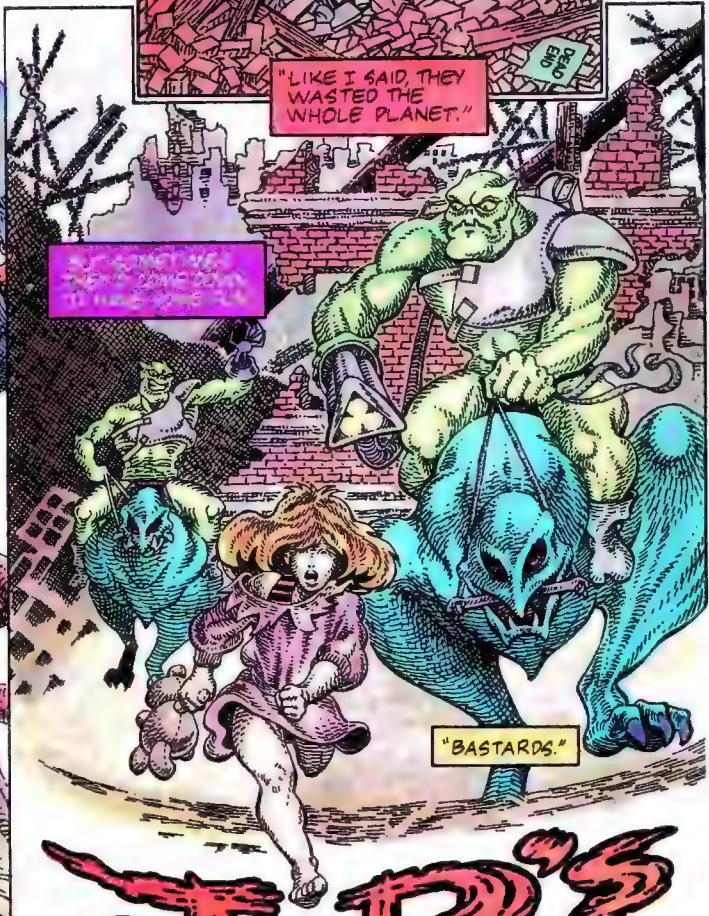
"I WAS JUST A KID WHEN THEY LANDED AND TRASHED THE WHOLE FREAKIN' PLANET."



"I'M FOURTEEN NOW AND A WHOLE LOT SMARTER. GUESS YOU COULD SAY I GREW UP A LOT THE PAST FEW YEARS."

"LIKE I SAID, THEY WASTED THE WHOLE PLANET."

THEY WASTED THE WHOLE PLANET.



"BASTARDS."

J.D.'s

STORY CHARLES DIXON ART THOMAS WIMBISH
LETTERS KURT HATHAWAY COLORS PHIL DeWALT

"I'M THE ONE WITH THE PLASMA RIFLE. MY NAME'S **BEAMER**. THAT'S NOT THE NAME MY PARENTS GAVE ME, BUT THEY'RE DEAD, SO WHO CARES?"

SQUEETS!

GET YOUR ASS DOWN!

OPEN UP ON THEM!

WATCH YOUR AIM, BEAMER!

YEAH! THEY'RE HISTORY!

I DON'T WANNA BE BAIT ANYMORE! I DON'T LIKE THIS GAME!

STOP CRABBING, SQUEETS.

WE'RE NOT GOING TO PLAY THIS GAME ANYMORE.

I'VE THOUGHT OF A BETTER GAME.

"YEAH, I FIGURED IT WAS TIME FOR A **NEW** GAME."

KRIK!
KRIK!

ALL THESE MONS WOULD
THE B. WITH IT IS A FINE
BOOK WITHOUT ON THEY
FOR A WARE. CURE WERE
HE MAY E. CURE THIS
MACHIN UP

CLUD!
THUD!
WHUK!

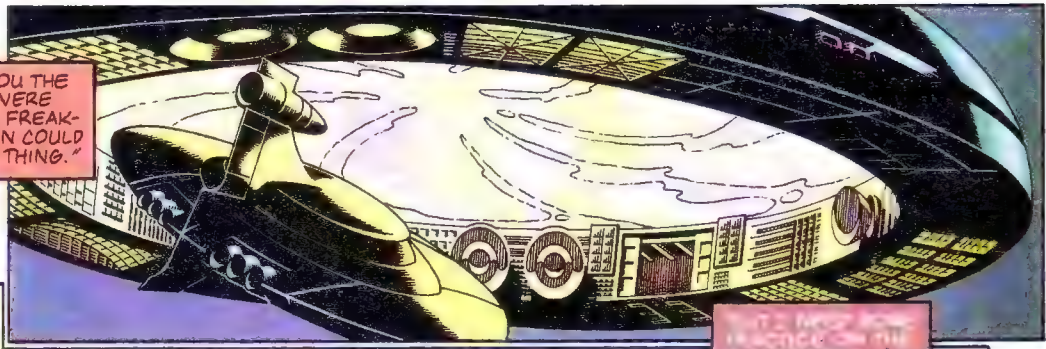
DON'T TOUCH ANYTHING, SQUEETS.

YOU KNOW HOW TO FLY THIS THING?

SURE...
GIVE ME A MINUTE.

NEXT STOP...
MOTHER SHIP!

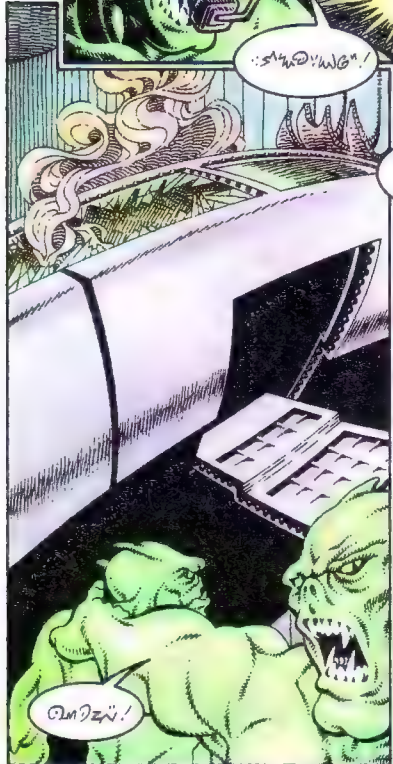
"I TOLD YOU THE ALIENS WERE STUPID. A FREAK-IN' MORON COULD FLY THIS THING."



THEY'RE NOT LANDING!



SHOCKING!



OMIGOD!



TAKE 'EM DOWN!

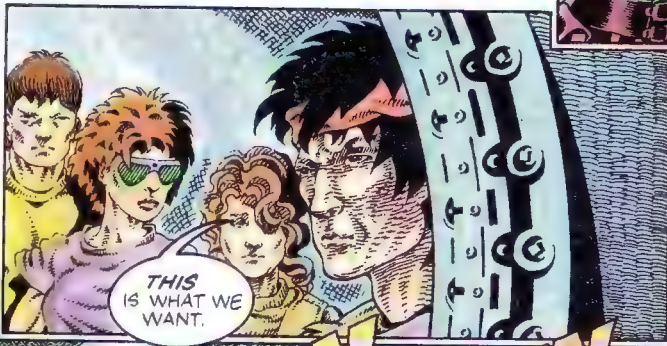
BOATY BOATY BOATY

GWA!



C'MON! C'MON!

SPREAD OUT!







ALL MY LIFE I'D **KNOWN** IT WOULD HAPPEN. MY DEAR, SWEET MARK HAD DIED... AND NOW I WAS **ALONE**. I WASN'T EVEN BORN WHEN MY TWO-THOUSAND SELECT ANCESTORS COLONIZED THIS PLANET THIRTY-TWO YEARS AGO NOW, OUT OF THEM AND THE FEW CHILDREN I'D GROWN UP WITH, I WAS THE ONLY HUMAN LEFT ALIVE ON **CANMANDU**.

CANMANDU. WHAT A NAME FOR A PLANET. CANMANDU HAD BECOME A LIE. MAN **COULDN'T** DO. NOT **HERE**. NOT WITHOUT CHILDREN TO CARRY ON. AFTER THE PLAGUE, EVERY PREGNANCY ON OUR WORLD ENDED IN STILLBIRTH. EVEN MINE. ALL OUR LIVES, MARK AND I NEVER SAW ANYTHING BUT DEATH. WE **TRIED** TO MAKE A LIFE ANYWAY, BUT THE ONE HOPE WE'VE HAD WAS FUTILE.

STILLBORN

STORY
ERIC DINEHART
PENCILS
TOM LYLE
INKS
ROMEO TANGHAL
LETTERS
KURT HATHAWAY
COLOURS
LOVERN KINDZIERSKI

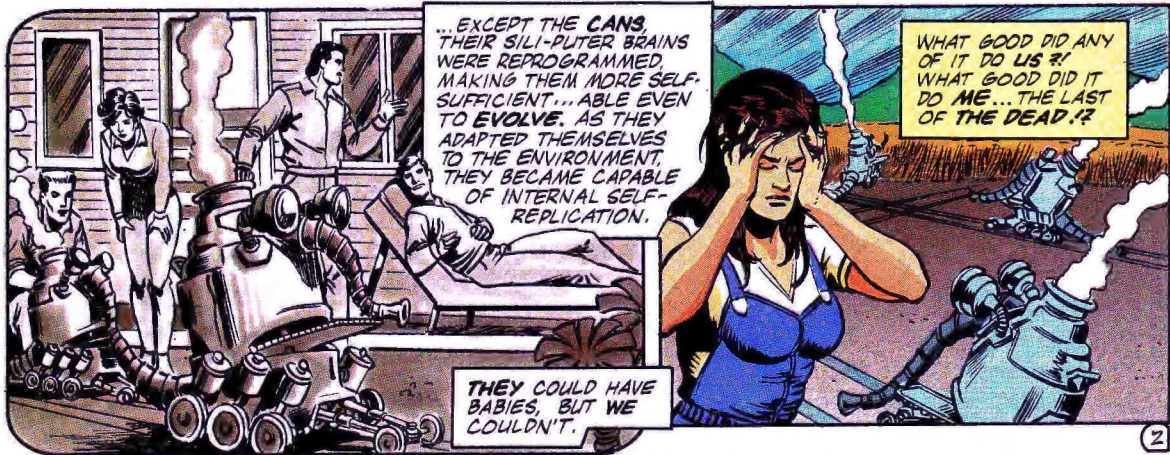
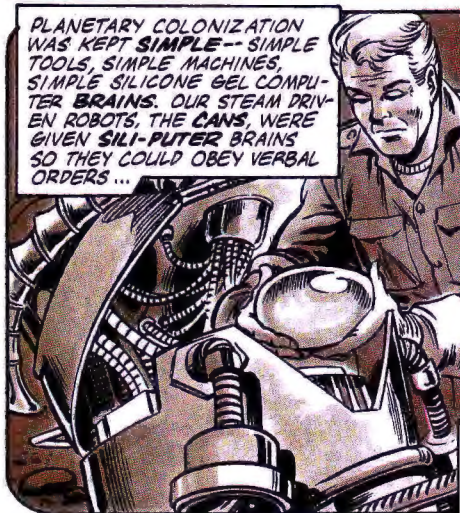
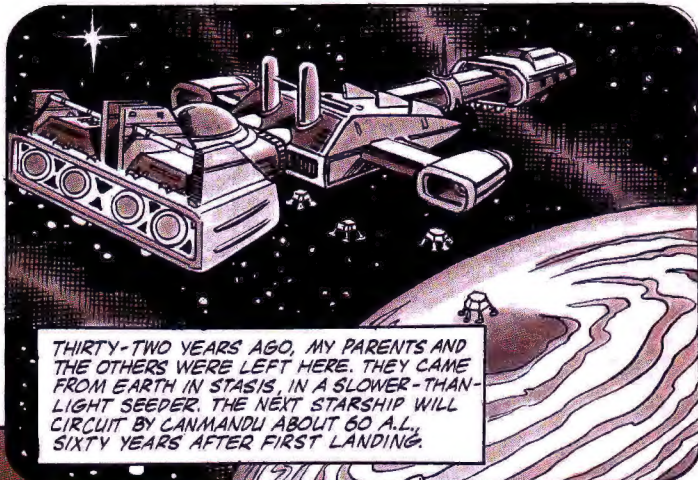
MARK DANIEL
LANDS
BELOVED HUSBAND
BORN:
JUNE 3, 11 A.L.
DIED:
AUG 15, 3244.

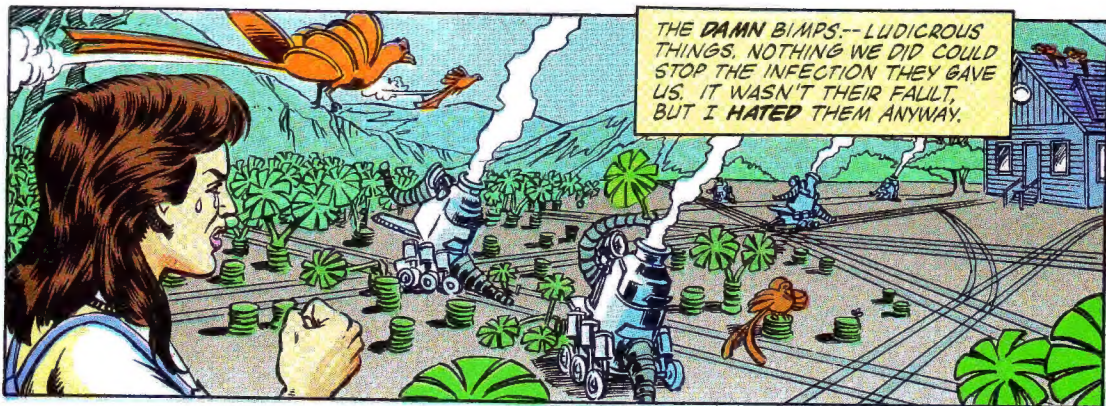
"CANS" DESIGNED BY: B.C. BOYER

I'D DELIVERED A STILLBIRTH TWO DAYS AGO. MY PREGNANCY WAS THE ONLY REASON MARK HAD HUNG ON TO LIFE AS LONG AS HE DID. AND WITHOUT HIM-- AND MY BABY-- IT'D BE ME NEXT...

Whee-
Toot??

...IN A MONTH MAYBE, NO MORE THAN A YEAR, I'D GO. JUST LIKE MARK. WHAT WAS THERE FOR ME TO HANG ON TO?

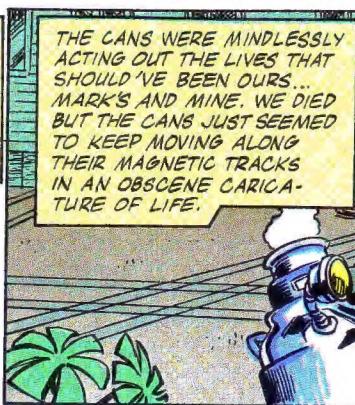




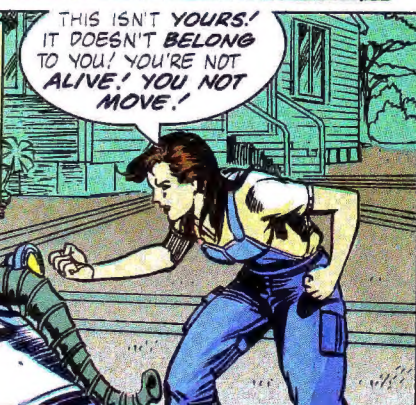
THE DAMN BIMPS--LUDICROUS THINGS, NOTHING WE DID COULD STOP THE INFECTION THEY GAVE US. IT WASN'T THEIR FAULT, BUT I HATED THEM ANYWAY.



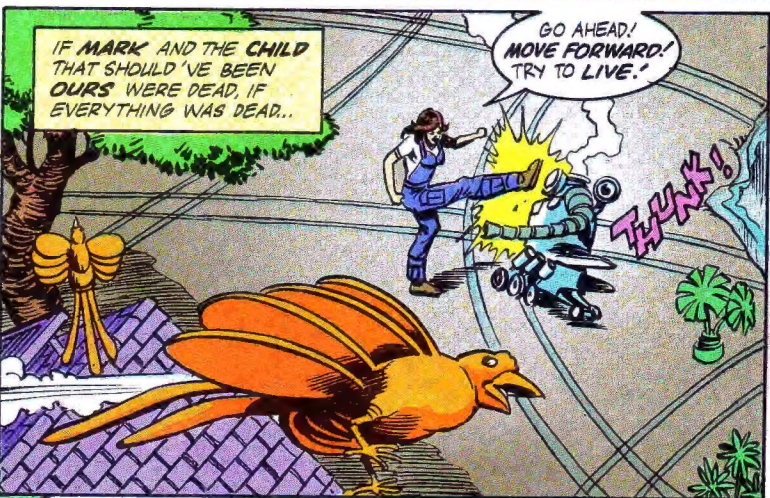
AND THE CANS! EVERYONE HAD THOUGHT OF THE CANS AS INNOCENTS! WELL, WHAT THE HELL DID IT MATTER TO BE INNOCENT? WE WERE INNOCENT! WE WERE DEAD! I WAS DEAD! WHY WEREN'T THE CANS DEAD, TOO?



THE CANS WERE MINDLESSLY ACTING OUT THE LIVES THAT SHOULD'VE BEEN OURS... MARK'S AND MINE. WE DIED BUT THE CANS JUST SEEMED TO KEEP MOVING ALONG THEIR MAGNETIC TRACKS IN AN OBSCENE CARICATURE OF LIFE.



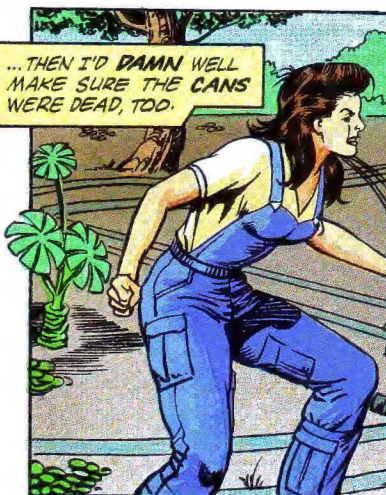
THIS ISN'T YOURS! IT DOESN'T BELONG TO YOU! YOU'RE NOT ALIVE! YOU NOT MOVE!



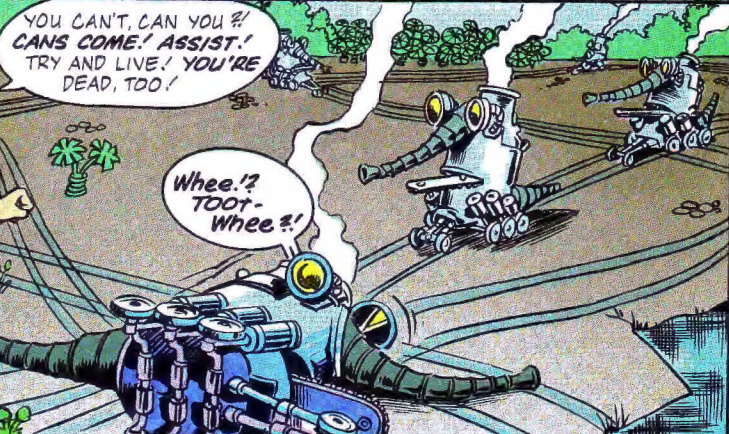
IF MARK AND THE CHILD THAT SHOULD'VE BEEN OURS WERE DEAD, IF EVERYTHING WAS DEAD...

GO AHEAD! MOVE FORWARD! TRY TO LIVE!

THUNK!



...THEN I'D DAMN WELL MAKE SURE THE CANS WERE DEAD, TOO.



YOU CAN'T, CAN YOU?! CANS COME! ASSIST! TRY AND LIVE! YOU'RE DEAD, TOO!

Whee-? TOOT-Whee?!



IT WAS LIKE NOTHING I'D EVER FELT IN MY LIFE... TO FINALLY SEE SOMETHING MORE HELPLESS THAN US... DYING MACHINES INSTEAD OF DYING PEOPLE.

CANS COME!
... COME! GO! ... GO NOWHERE!

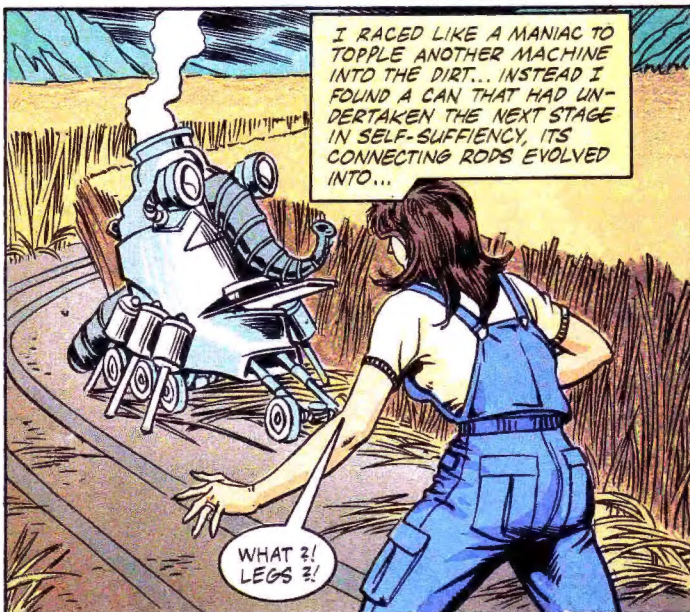
Toot!

Whee...



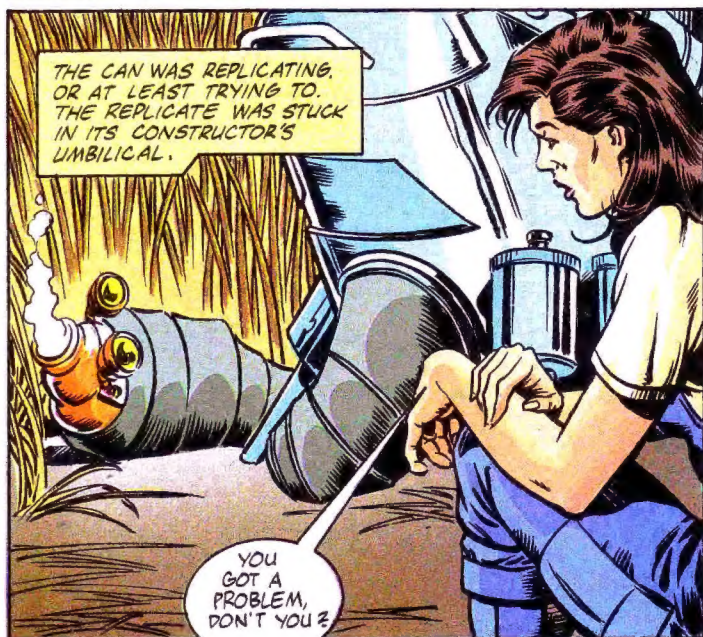
-- Toot ?!

I WANTED TO DESTROY EVERY CAN AND CARRY THAT INTOXICATING FEELING WITH ME TO THE LAST DAY OF MY LIFE.



I RACED LIKE A MANIAC TO TOPPLE ANOTHER MACHINE INTO THE DIRT... INSTEAD I FOUND A CAN THAT HAD UNDERTAKEN THE NEXT STAGE IN SELF-SUFFICIENCY, ITS CONNECTING RODS EVOLVED INTO...

WHAT ?!
LEGS ?!



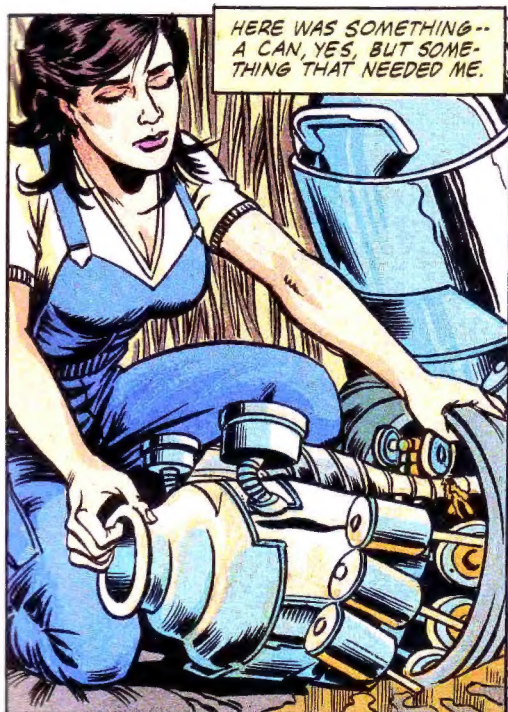
THE CAN WAS REPLICATING, OR AT LEAST TRYING TO. THE REPLICATE WAS STUCK IN ITS CONSTRUCTOR'S UMBILICAL.

YOU GOT A PROBLEM, DON'T YOU ?

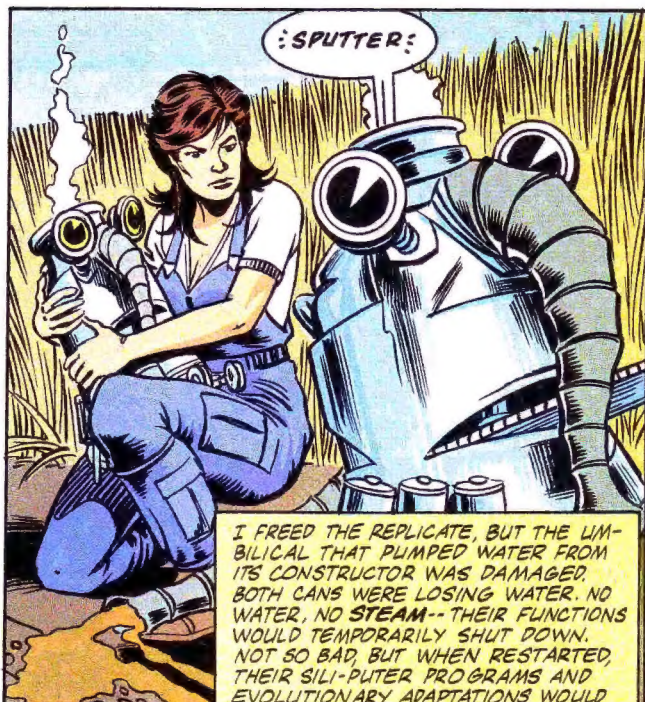


IT WAS A PROBLEM THAT ONLY I COULD SOLVE. FOR THE MOMENT MY ANGER WAS FORGOTTEN.

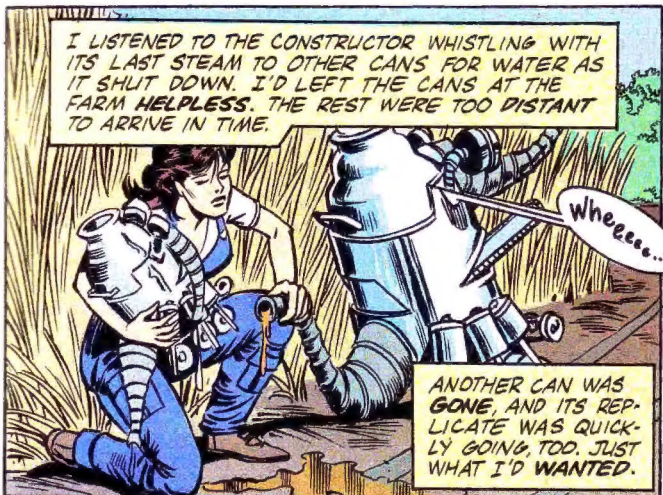
COME!
IT'S ALL RIGHT. COME OUT.



HERE WAS SOMETHING--
A CAN, YES, BUT SOME-
THING THAT NEEDED ME.

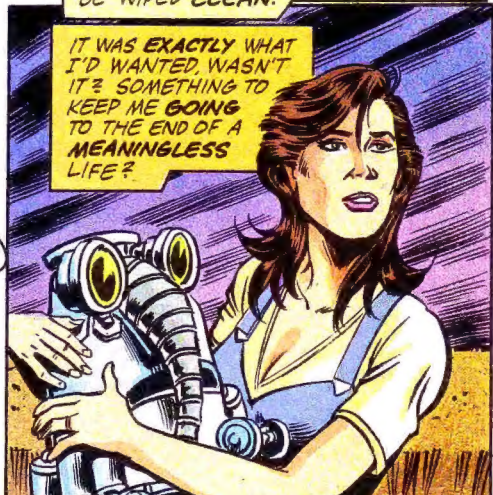


I FREED THE REPLICATE, BUT THE LIM-
BILICAL THAT PUMPED WATER FROM
ITS CONSTRUCTOR WAS DAMAGED.
BOTH CANS WERE LOSING WATER. NO
WATER, NO STEAM-- THEIR FUNCTIONS
WOULD TEMPORARILY SHUT DOWN.
NOT SO BAD, BUT WHEN RESTARTED,
THEIR SILI-PUTER PROGRAMS AND
EVOLUTIONARY ADAPTATIONS WOULD
BE WIRED CLEAN.

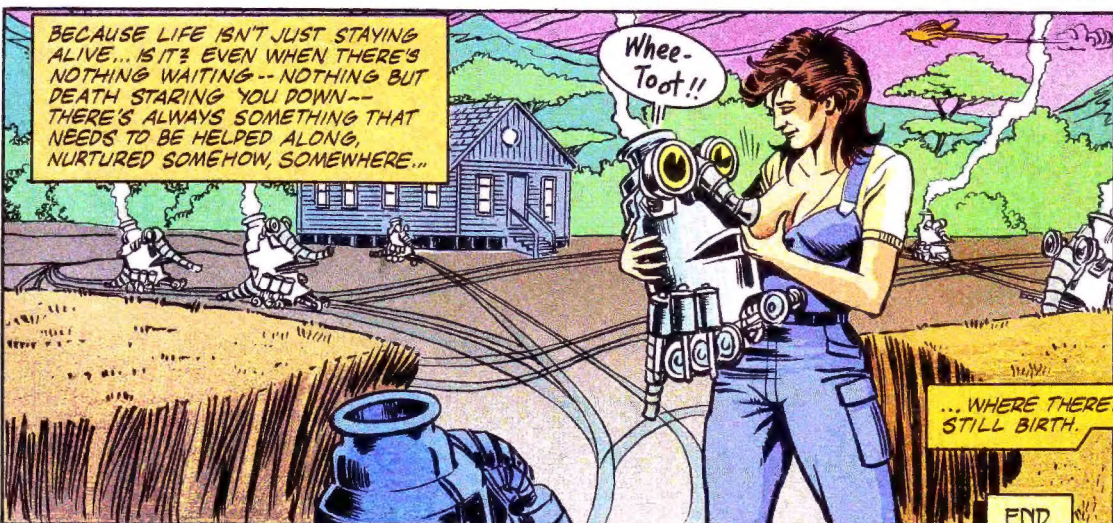


I LISTENED TO THE CONSTRUCTOR WHISTLING WITH ITS LAST STEAM TO OTHER CANS FOR WATER AS IT SHUT DOWN. I'D LEFT THE CANS AT THE FARM HELPLESS. THE REST WERE TOO DISTANT TO ARRIVE IN TIME.

ANOTHER CAN WAS
GONE, AND ITS REP-
LIMATE WAS QUICK-
LY GOING, TOO. JUST
WHAT I'D WANTED.



IT WAS EXACTLY WHAT
I'D WANTED, WASN'T
IT? SOMETHING TO
KEEP ME GOING
TO THE END OF A
MEANINGLESS
LIFE?



BECAUSE LIFE ISN'T JUST STAYING
ALIVE... IS IT? EVEN WHEN THERE'S
NOTHING WAITING-- NOTHING BUT
DEATH STARING YOU DOWN--
THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING THAT
NEEDS TO BE HELPED ALONG,
NURTURED SOMEHOW, SOMEWHERE...

... WHERE THERE'S
STILL BIRTH.

END.